

ELECTRONIC MUSIC IN THE 1950S & 1960S

JULY 9, 2019

MANIFESTE

DU

FUTURISME

(Publié par le « FIGARO » le 20 Février 1909)

Nous avons veillé toute la nuit, mes amis et moi, sous des lampes de mosquée dont les coupoles de cuivre aussi ajourées que notre âme avaient pourtant des cœurs électriques. Et tout en piétinant notre native paresse sur d'opulents tapis persans, nous avons discuté aux frontières extrêmes de la logique et griffé le papier de démentes écritures.

Un immense orgueil gonflait nos poitrines, à nous sentir debout tous seuls, comme des phares ou comme des sentinelles avancées, face à l'armée des étoiles ennemies, qui campent dans leurs bivouacs célestes. Seuls avec les mécaniciens dans les infernales chaufferies des grands navires, seuls avec les noirs fantômes qui fourragent dans le ventre rouge des locomotives affolées, seuls avec les ivrognes battant des ailes contre les murs !

Et nous voilà brusquement distraits par le roulement des énormes tramways à double étage, qui passent sursautants, bariolés de lumières, tels les hameaux en fête que le Pô débordé ébranle tout à coup et déracine, pour les entraîner, sur les cascades et les remous d'un déluge, jusqu'à la mer.

Puis le silence s'aggrava. Comme nous écoutions la prière exténuée du vieux canal et crisser les os des palais moribonds dans leur barbe de verdure, soudain rugirent sous nos fenêtres les automobiles affamées.

— Allons, dis-je, mes amis ! Partons ! Enfin la Mythologie et l'Idéal mystique sont surpassés. Nous allons assister à la naissance du Centaure et nous verrons bientôt voler les premiers Anges ! — Il faudra ébranler les portes de la vie pour en essayer les gonds et les verrous !... Partons ! Voilà bien le premier soleil levant sur la terre !... Rien n'égale la splendeur de son épée rouge qui s'escrime pour la première fois, dans nos ténèbres millénaires.

Nous nous approchâmes des trois machines renâclantes pour flatter leur poitrail. Je m'allongeai sur la mienne comme un cadavre dans sa bière, mais je ressuscitai soudain sous le volant — couperet de guillotine — qui menaçait mon estomac.

Futurist:

erasure of artistic memory, belief in the “cleansing power of warfare.” Machines will help realize this “dream” (1909)

Futurist:

In the nineteenth century, with the invention of machines, Noise was born. Today Noise is triumphant, and reigns supreme over the senses of men....we approach nearer and nearer to the MUSIC OF NOISE. We must break out of this narrow circle of pure musical sounds, and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds (1913).

LUIGI RUSSOLO
FUTURISTA

**L'Arte
dei rumori**

EDIZIONI FUTURISTE DI "POESIA"
CORSO VENEZIA, 61 - MILANO
1916



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EDGAR VARÈSE

(1883-1965)

- French composer (but moves to New York in 1915)
- trained in mathematics and engineering
- reads Busoni's *Sketch of a New Aesthetic* in 1907
- interested in electronic instruments even before World War I
- *Amériques* (1918-1921): requires 11 percussionists (two sirens), later *ondes martenot*
- interested in neo-primitivism, futurism
- *Hyperprism* (1923), *Intégrales* (1925), *Ionisation* (1931)



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- 1934-1954: long silent period for Varèse



List of instruments from the manuscript of *Ionisation*

First page of the manuscript of *Ionisation*

THE LIBERATION OF SOUND

EDGARD VARÈSE

Our musical alphabet is poor and illogical.

Music, which should pulsate with life, needs new means of expression, and science alone can infuse it with youthful vigor.

Why Italian Futurists, have you slavishly reproduced only what is commonplace and boring in the bustle of our daily lives.

I dream of instruments obedient to my thought and which with their contribution of a whole new world of unsuspected sounds, will lend themselves to the exigencies of my inner rhythm.¹

(Excerpts from lectures by Varèse, compiled and edited
with footnotes by Chou Wen-chung)†

NEW INSTRUMENTS AND NEW MUSIC*

WHEN new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it, taking the place of the linear counterpoint, the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived. When these sound-masses collide the phenomena of penetration or repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles. There will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies. The entire work will be a melodic totality. The entire work will flow as a river flows.



AESTHETIC DEBATES



Pierre Schaeffer



Karlheinz Stockhausen

Karlheinz Stockhausen

- born near Cologne.
- Parents died, leaving him 17-year-old orphan
- 1951: attends summer course at Darmstadt, studies for a year with Messiaen.
- 1953: returns to Cologne, gets a job at newly established studio for Electronic Music (sponsored Radio Cologne).
- Emerges as one of the leading composers and theorists of European avant-garde.

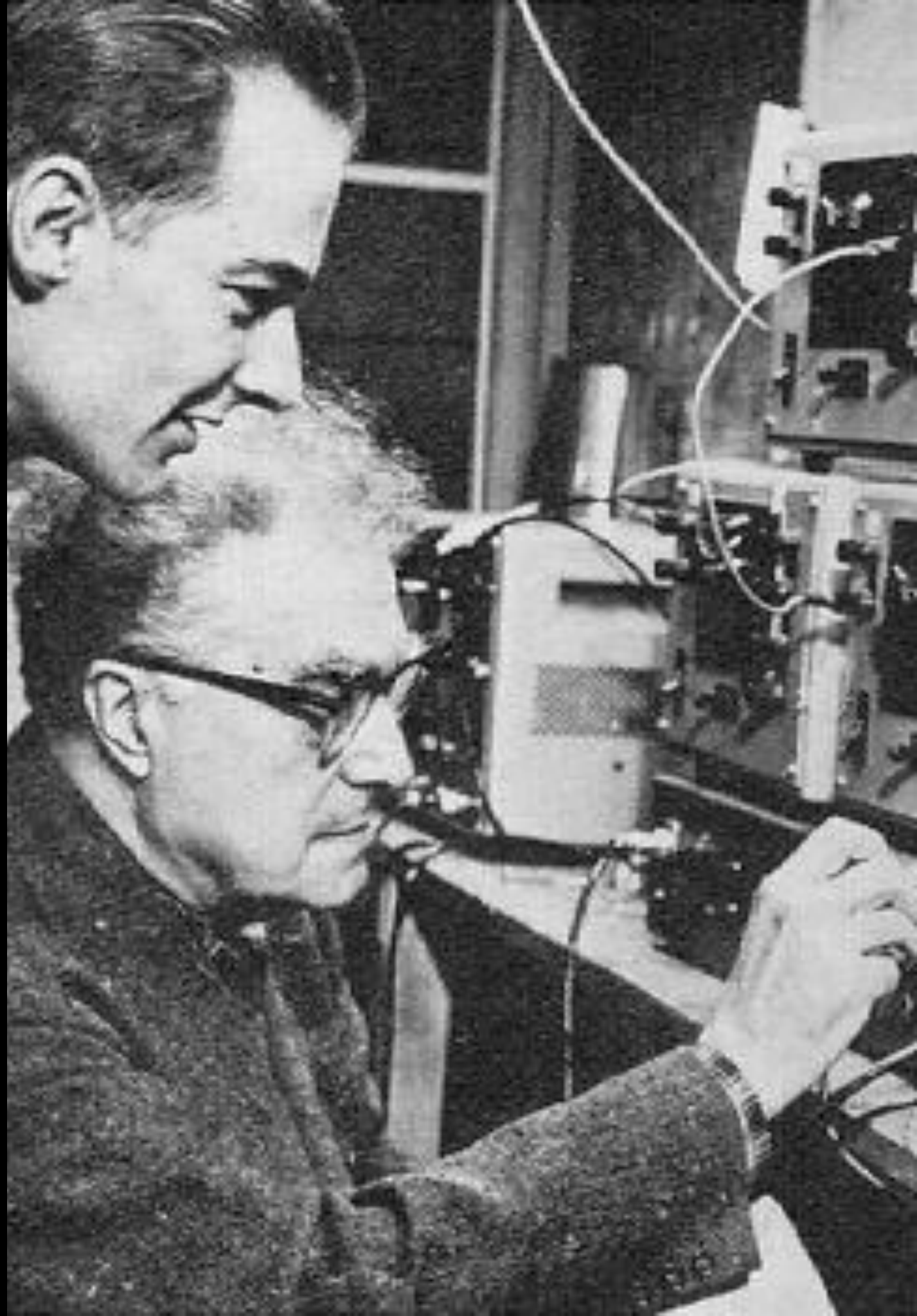


CONCERT OF "TAPE MUSIC" (1952)

COLUMBIA-PRINCETON ELECTRONIC
MUSIC CENTER (1955)

EDGAR VARÈSE (1883-1965)

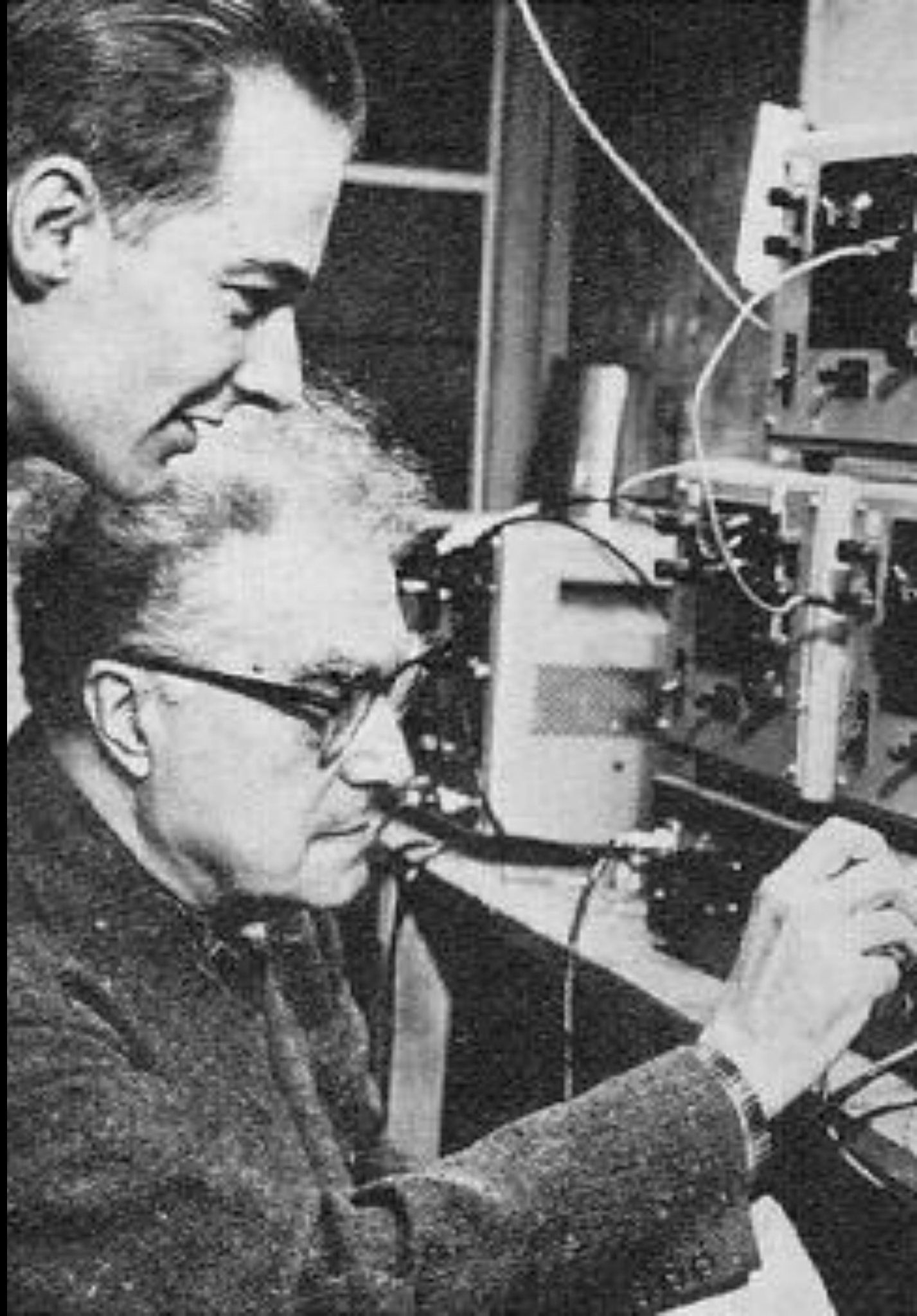
- advent of new technologies
—particularly tape recorder
—reinvigorates Varèse as
composer and figure within
the *avant-garde*
- Receives an Ampex tape
recorder in 1953: takes it to
iron foundries, sawmills,
factories around Philadelphia
- *Déserts* (1949-1954)



EDGAR VARÈSE

(1883-1965)

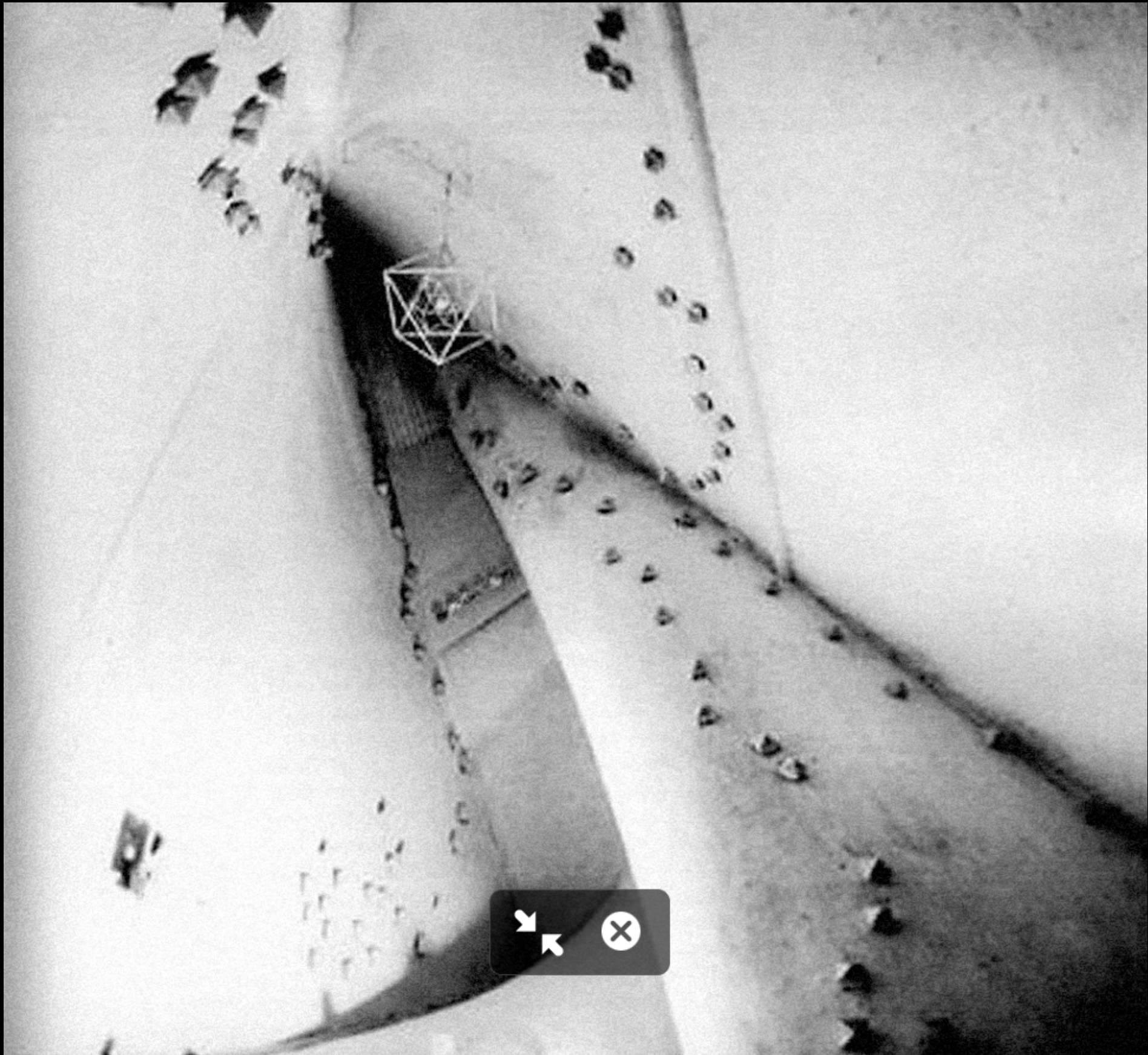
- incredibly excited by the possibilities of the Mark II synthesizer at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center
- "I am fascinated that through electronic means one can generate a sound instantaneously. With electronics you can generate something live than can appear or disappear instantly and unpredictably. Electronic music is composing with living sounds, as paradoxical as that sounds. I want to generate something directly by electronic means, I do not want an *a priori* control of all its aspects." (1964)



POÈME ÉLECTRONIQUE (1958)



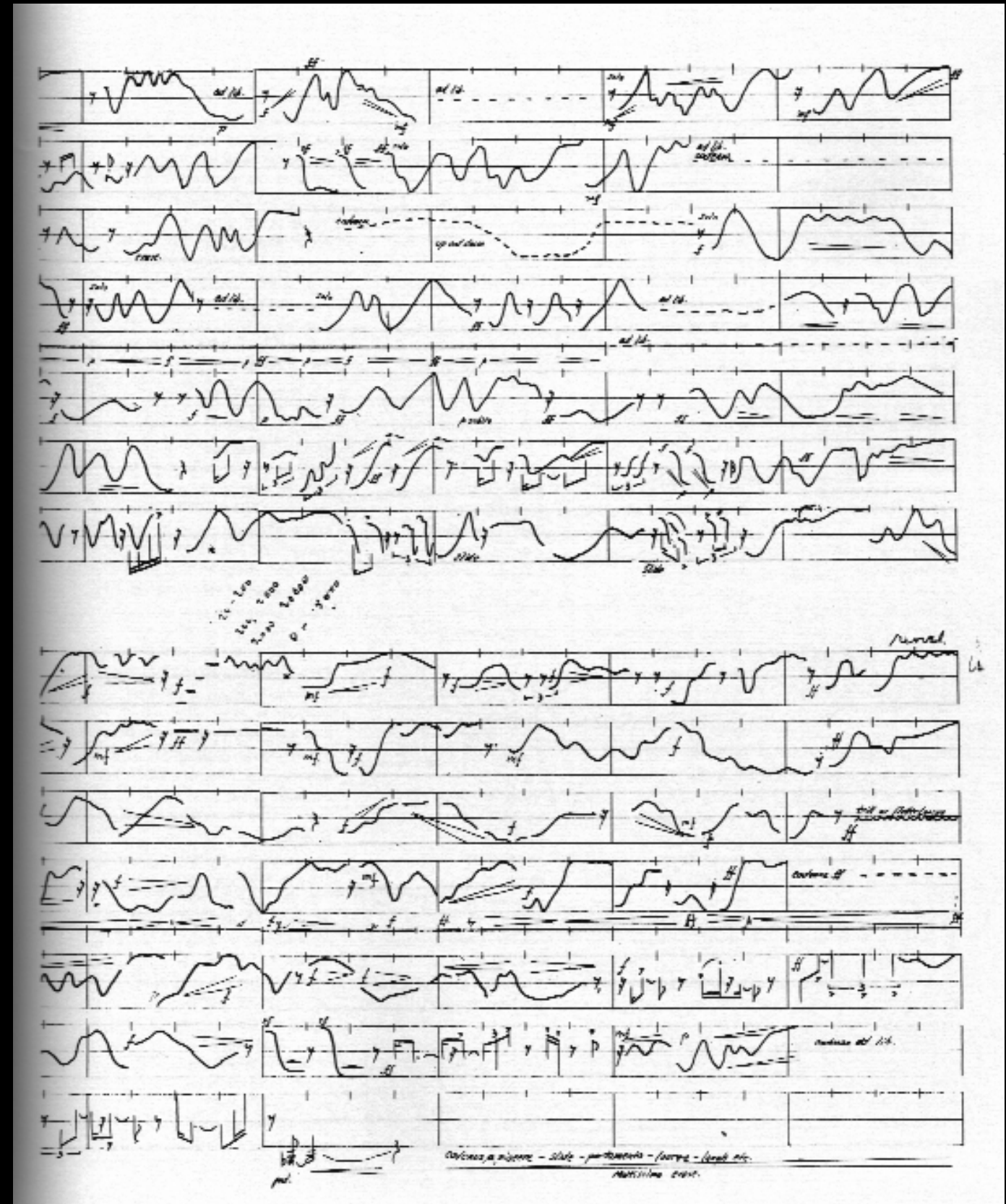
POÈME ÉLECTRONIQUE (1958)



POÈME ÉLECTRONIQUE (1958)



POÈME ÉLECTRONIQUE (1958)



KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI (B. 1933)

- Polish composer
- 1959: wins all 3 prizes in a competition for young composers (sponsored by Polish Composer's Union)
- goes abroad, meets Luigi Nono, Pierre Boulez, and a music programmer in Baden-Baden
- 1960: "sonority pieces"



FOR THE VICTIMS OF HIROSHIMA: THRENODY (1961)

Copyrighted Material

Krzysztof Penderecki
Threnos
Den Opfern von Hiroshima

The image displays two pages of a musical score for Krzysztof Penderecki's 'Threnos'. The top page features staves for 24 Violini, 10 Viols, 10 Violoncelli, and 1 Contrabbassi. The bottom page features staves for 14 Vn, 10 Vi, 10 Vc, and 1 Cs. The score is written in a complex, non-traditional notation with many accidentals and dynamic markings. The title 'Threnos' and subtitle 'Den Opfern von Hiroshima' are prominently displayed. The copyright notice at the bottom states 'Copyright © 1961 by DESIRON MUSIC INC. and PHM EDITIONS'.

24 Violini

10 Viols

10 Violoncelli

1 Contrabbassi

14 Vn

10 Vi

10 Vc

1 Cs

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FOR THE VICTIMS OF HIROSHIMA: THRENODY (1961)

11

15

12Vn

Musical score for 12 Violins (12Vn). The score is written on 12 staves, numbered 1 to 12. It features a crescendo and decrescendo passage, with notes and rests distributed across the staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

12Vn

Musical score for 12 Violins (12Vn). The score is written on 12 staves, numbered 1 to 12. It features a crescendo and decrescendo passage, with notes and rests distributed across the staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

10VI

Musical score for 10 Violins (10VI). The score is written on 10 staves, numbered 1 to 10. It features a crescendo and decrescendo passage, with notes and rests distributed across the staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

10Vc

Musical score for 10 Violins (10Vc). The score is written on 10 staves, numbered 1 to 10. It features a crescendo and decrescendo passage, with notes and rests distributed across the staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

8Cb

Musical score for 8 Cellos (8Cb). The score is written on 8 staves, numbered 1 to 8. It features a crescendo and decrescendo passage, with notes and rests distributed across the staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

20"

"The natural is abolished. Vocal and instrumental forms are eliminated, tonality, functional harmony, simple polyphony and symmetrical rhythm are suspended." Aligning music with contemporary science and technology, he argued composers had broken free from the constraints of nature and history: "We are astonished, and not without pride, to have before us an art totally controlled by the spirit of man, in a way not previously imaginable."

1955: GERMAN MUSICOLOGIST H.H. STUCKENSCHMIDT
IN *DIE REIHE*
(ISSUE FOCUSED DIRECTLY ON ELECTRONIC MUSIC)

WHAT IS THE REVOLUTION?

- More control? More Freedom?
 - Milton Babbitt: "notion of having complete control over one's composition, being complete master of all you survey" ...what is to be sought is not novel sounds, but greater precision in the application of those "traditional" musical criteria
-
- John Cage: "composers can make music directly, without the assistance of intermediary performers"
 - Varèse: "The composer is the only one of the creators today who is denied direct contact with the public" (tape will help eliminate the middleman of the performer)"